

TO :	Mr. Hitz / <input type="text"/>	STAT	DATE OF REQUEST 3 Nov 78
FROM :	RJK <i>DK</i>		SUSPENSE DATE 15 Nov 78
SUBJECT: House Panel, HASC, Reports a Nuclear Weapons Test Ban Could Risk U.S. Security			

NOTES

NFAC SALT Support Staff is reviewing the report and hearings mentioned in this press release. On 16 March, STAT [redacted] OSR, and STAT [redacted] OSI, briefed the Subcommittee on implications of a comprehensive test ban treaty. Also on 27 September, Doug MacEachin, STAT [redacted] OSR, and STAT [redacted] CSS, briefed the Committee on a related topic, MBFR. Given the position the Subcommittee has taken it can be anticipated that it will remain active during the 96th Congress.

COORDINATED WITH (list names as well as offices)

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OLC #78-3329

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NOVEMBER 3, 1978HOUSE PANEL REPORTS A NUCLEAR WEAPONS TEST
BAN COULD RISK U.S. SECURITY

A House Armed Services Committee panel appointed to inquire into negotiations which might lead to a nuclear weapons test ban treaty between the U.S., the Soviet Union and Britain today released its report.

The Panel on Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was appointed in May of 1978 to aid the Armed Services Committee's exercise of oversight of U.S. arms control and disarmament efforts. The panel's membership consists of Congressman Charles H. Wilson (D-Calif) as Chairman, Congressman William L. Dickinson (R-Ala) as ranking minority member, Congressman Bob Carr (D-Mich), Congressman Samuel S. Stratton (D-N.Y.) and Congresswoman Marjorie Holt (R-Md).

The panel's report concludes that a comprehensive nuclear weapons test ban of the type now contemplated by the Carter Administration would not be in accord with the national security interests of the United States. As Chairman Wilson stated upon release of the report, "We found that the suspension of weapons tests for even a brief period of from 3 to 5 years, which the Administration now wants, can risk the reliability of U.S. weapons which exist only for the purpose of deterring war. On the other hand, the panel could not find a single overriding political benefit to U.S. national security which would flow from a comprehensive test ban treaty. In fact, as the panel's report points out, a treaty based on current U.S.-U.S.S.R.-U.K. negotiations in Geneva could very well have grave political problems as well as military disadvantages for the United States."

According to the panel's report, the Carter Administration has, during the past year, taken various and inconsistent positions with respect to a test ban agreement. Because of serious concern about nuclear weapons reliability during a period of no testing, the Administration is now seeking only a testing moratorium of 3 to 5 years, with options to resume testing at the end of that period.

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The Administration has also retreated from its previous demand for mandatory onsite inspection where an illegal nuclear test is suspected. Instead, onsite inspection within Russia, for example, could be summarily refused. For this reason, and because there are no technical means to prove whether or not the Russians are continuing to test nuclear weapons, Congressman Wilson stated that a comprehensive test ban is "basically a policy of self-denial of technical information about our own nuclear weapons. " It would amount," he said, to an attempted technical solution to what is basically a political problem, that is, whether the thirty-year confrontation of the U.S. by the Soviet Union will continue, or whether some political basis for cooperation can be found in the future."

The panel report states that the U.S. conducts nuclear weapons tests for several reasons other than the development of new weapons. One of the most important reasons cited is the ability to discover and correct problems, which have occurred in the past and are expected in the future, which could prevent U.S. Minuteman and Polaris warheads from working as designed. Another reason for testing is to make modifications and replacements to obsolete or faulty warheads now deployed. Without testing, the report states, it will be impossible to maintain competent nuclear weapons designers and engineers with the skills and judgment necessary to make changes in weapons for reasons of safety, security and lower cost.

As Chairman Wilson noted, "The reliability of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile is at risk even if both the U.S. and U.S.S.R. do not test; the problem is significantly compounded if the Soviets cheat. For many years to come the U.S. will be unable to verify -- i.e. to prove -- whether or not the Soviets are conducting nuclear tests of value to them. Officials of the Administration are pushing for a comprehensive test ban even though testimony, and evidence from other sources, confirmed that major facilities and vital equipment necessary for a realistic capability to prevent or prove cheating, would not be available for some number of years. "We know that an open society like the United States could not cheat. "We cannot say this for a closed society.

"Nuclear weapons experts currently engaged in weapons design, development and production," the Chairman stated, "are in unanimous agreement that where a zero test ban is supposedly in effect, a very modest low yield clandestine testing program which included an occasional 5 or 10 kiloton test would provide significant advantage to the Soviet Union.

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"It was established during the hearings that by secret testing at low yields, the Soviets could maintain and improve their stockpile of nuclear weapons. Witnesses pointed out that whole new families of tactical weapons, such as the enhanced radiation-reduced blast systems, could be developed by clandestine testing. Under a comprehensive test ban the Soviets could literally forge ahead. A dangerous asymmetry in U.S.-U.S.S.R. weapons reliability and capability could develop. The military risk is real.

"The nonproliferation of nuclear weapons is a high priority foreign policy goal of the Carter Administration. This is commendable," Chairman Wilson stated. "However, as our report concludes, a treaty based on the current structure now being negotiated in Geneva would be only cosmetic and would not be in the best national interest of the United States. I've used the word 'cosmetic' in describing a test ban for a simple reason," the Chairman said, "because such an agreement would have absolutely no effect upon the Administration's nonproliferation efforts.

Chairman Wilson concluded, "We recommend that the President and the Congress concentrate on political rather than technical solutions to political problems which may result in attempted proliferation of nuclear weapons, recognizing that attempts to stifle technology have been historically unsuccessful.

"Unfortunately, arms control enthusiasts have been careless with the truth about arms control agreements. Both the need for such agreements and their asserted advantages have been greatly overstated. In our zeal to press toward arms control, for either domestic or international political purposes, we must not neglect the role that a reliable nuclear deterrent capability will inevitably play in national and international security affairs. I am convinced that only through a nuclear weapons testing program can the United States escape a position of strategic inferiority in the years ahead.

"We must continue to provide positive evidence to our allies and to our potential adversaries that we intend to maintain our strategic deterrent power. If we fail to do this, we will not be in a favorable position to negotiate other acceptable limitations on offensive military systems such as SALT or Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction ('MBFR) in Europe."

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